

CONTAINER AND KIT FOR STORING AND DISPLAYING CANDLES

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

The present invention relates to the field of giftware and, in particular, to a container and kit for storing and displaying candles.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

In recent years, the giftware industry has seen a dramatic increase in the sales of its products. This increase in sales is tied to many factors, including the expansion of catalog and Internet sales outlets, and a trend among consumers to spend more money on home furnishings.

One facet of the giftware industry that has contributed greatly to this increase is the market for candles and accessories. In fact, a recent study has indicated that the consumer market for candles and accessories totaled \$2.2 billion in 1999 and is expected to grow to over \$3 billion in sales by 2003. The same study indicated that more than 80% of adult Americans purchased candles or accessories in 1999.

Candles come in many shapes, styles, colors and fragrances. In addition, there are a wide variety of candle accessories that are designed to compliment the candles. These accessories include decorative "toppers", which are designed to cover the candle when it is not in use, decorative jars in which candles may be stored, and decorative boxes for storing candles. By combining visual accessories with the pleasing sight and scent of candles, giftware manufacturers have capitalized on consumers' desire for products that create a sense of peace and tranquility in the home.

One style of candle that has become particularly popular is commonly referred to as a "tea light". Tea light candles have been on the market for many years and generally

consist of a short round cup, a disc of candle wax that occupies the volume of the cup and a wick that extends through the top surface of the wax. These candles have traditionally been placed within separate fixtures, such as glass "tea lights", in order to illuminate the fixture and to hide the relatively plain appearance of the candle itself.

5 Because tea light candles are generally small, they must be frequently replaced. Accordingly, spare tea lights need to be stored in a location proximate to where they will eventually be used. In response to this need, some companies have developed decorative boxes that are of sufficient size to accommodate tea lights and have visual designs that enhance the appearance of the surroundings of a room. This meets the need of locating
10 spare tea light candles proximate to its fixture. However, the need for a separate fixture in which to burn the candle is itself a drawback as this can tend to create undesired clutter within a room.

 Despite the growth in sales of tea light candles, and of decorative boxes to house them, there has heretofore been no product that combines the storage features of a
15 decorative box with an integral means for displaying tea light candles. In addition, the inventor knows of no product that includes container having a lid that may be overturned to allow tea light candles to sit within compartments in the bottom surface of the overturned lid and to be displayed therein.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

20 The present invention is a container and kit for storing and displaying at least one candle. In its most basic form, the container of the present invention includes a hollow base having a bottom and a side portion that extends from the bottom to define an open top and an interior space. The interior space being dimensioned to allow at least one

The lid has a top surface and a bottom surface that are each dimensioned to securely rest upon the side portion of the base. The bottom surface of the lid includes at least one compartment that is dimensioned for accepting and displaying a candle.

5 In order to display a candle, a user would remove the lid from the base, remove
candles from the interior surface of the base, overturn the lid such that the top surface is
in contact with the side portion of the base, and place the candles into the compartment,
or compartments, within the bottom surface of the overturned lid. When the user is
finished burning the candle(s), the user removes the lid from the base, places the candles
10 back into the interior space, and returns the lid to its storage position, with the bottom
surface of the lid contacting the side portion of the base.

In the preferred embodiment of the container, the compartment within the bottom surface of the lid is dimensioned to accept a tea light candle. In this preferred embodiment, the top surface and bottom surface of the lid, and the side portion of the base, each include a decorative design disposed upon at least a portion thereof.

The top surface and bottom surface of the lid may also include an alignment detail for aligning the lid with the base when the lid is in a display position. In the preferred embodiment, the bottom surface has an alignment detail made up of lip dimensioned to rest upon the side portion of the base and an extended portion dimensioned to nest within said open top of said base. In embodiments where the side portion of the base has a chamfered portion disposed proximate to the open top, at least one of the top surface and bottom surface utilize a countersunk alignment detail that is dimensioned to mate with the chamfered portion of said side portion of said base when said lid is in a storage position

and a display position, respectively. In other embodiments, the top surface utilizes a lip as an alignment detail while, in still others, neither the top surface or bottom surface utilize such a detail.

Various embodiments employ bases and tops of varying shapes and sizes and may
5 be made of different materials. In the preferred embodiment, the base and top are made from a resin compound. This is preferred due to the fact that resin is relatively cheap, readily moldable into a variety of shapes and textures, and may be finished with a variety of decorative finishes. However, other embodiments are manufactured of combinations of wood, glass, plastic, metal, ceramics, concrete and stone.

10 In some embodiments, the number of compartments is varied from two, three, four, five, six, nine and 12 compartments. In some, there is a single compartment and the interior space within the base is dimensioned to allow at least two candles to be disposed therein in stacked relation to one another.

Some embodiments of the container utilize four side walls, which may be
15 dimensioned to define a substantially rectangular open top and an interior space having a shape of a substantially rectangular polygon. In others, the container has a single curved side wall, which may define a substantially circular open top and an interior space having a substantially cylindrical shape.

Finally, in some embodiments, the base portion also includes a wall mounting
20 plate extending from the side portion. The wall mounting plate allows the container to be mounted to a wall like a common sconce.

The inventor also contemplates that the container will be sold as a kit of parts, which make up the kit of the present invention. In its most basic embodiment, the kit

includes the basic container and at least one candle. It is preferred that this candle is a tea light candle and, in particular, a tea light candle having a scalloped sidewall. In other embodiments of the kit, the bottom surface of the lid is designed to allow the game of tic-tac-toe to be played when the lid is overturned and, accordingly, includes nine
5 compartments disposed in three by three relation to one another. In some such embodiments, a plurality of candles of a first color and a plurality of candles of a second color are provided and are used as playing pieces. In others, a plurality of separate playing pieces, dimensioned for disposal within the at least one compartment, are provided. These playing pieces may be conventional checkers, or may be specialized
10 pieces having decorative designs disposed upon one or more surfaces.

Therefore, it is an aspect of the invention to provide a container for both storing and displaying candles.

It is a further aspect of the invention to provide a container that has a decorative exterior that may be used to enhance the décor of a room.

15 It is a further aspect of the invention to provide a variety of containers having lids with varying numbers of compartments disposed within their bottom surfaces.

It is a further aspect of the invention to provide a container having a lid that may be disposed in a storage position to expose a decorative design and subsequently overturned to a display position in order to display burning candles.

20 It is a further aspect of the invention to provide a kit having a container for both storing and displaying candles and at least one candle.

These aspects of the invention are not meant to be exclusive and other features, aspects, and advantages of the present invention will be readily apparent to those of

ordinary skill in the art when read in conjunction with the following description,
appended claims and accompanying drawings.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

FIG. 1A is a top view of the top surface of one embodiment of the lid of the
5 container of the present invention.

FIG. 1B is a bottom view of the bottom surface the lid of FIG. 1A in which three
compartments are disposed.

FIG. 1C is a side view of one embodiment of the container of the present
invention showing the lid of FIGS. 1A and 1B disposed with the top surface touching the
10 base and three candles disposed within the three compartments of the lid.

FIG. 1D is a side view of one embodiment of the container of the present
invention showing the lid of FIGS. 1A and 1B disposed with the bottom surface touching
the base and the base cut away to reveal the interior space in which the candles are stored.

FIG. 2A is a bottom view of one embodiment of a lid having an oval shape and
15 two compartments that are surrounded by a decorative design.

FIG. 2B is a side view of the lid of FIG. 2A in which two hexagonal shaped tea
light candles are displayed.

FIG. 2C is a side view of one embodiment of a base, for use with the lid of FIGS.
2A and 2B, having a decorative design disposed about its side portion.

FIG. 3A is a top view of one embodiment of the lid having a rectangular shape, no
20 decorative design upon its top surface, and an extended ridge to mate with a lip formed
into the base.

FIG. 3B is a bottom view of the lid of FIG. 3A showing six compartments, no decorative design upon its bottom surface, and an extended ridge to mate with a lip formed into the base.

FIG. 4A is a side view of one embodiment of the container having a shaped lid with a handle and rounded top lip as an alignment detail, and a base having a decorative design disposed about its side portion.

FIG. 4B is a bottom view of the lid of FIG. 4A showing four compartments and no decorative design.

FIG. 5A is a side view of one embodiment of the container having a fully decorated lid in a storage position and a base that is cut away to show its interior space dimensioned to store candles in stacking relation to one another.

FIG. 5B is a side view of the container of FIG. 5A showing the lid in a display position with a single compartment into which a candle is disposed and showing a bottom surface having an extended portion that includes a decorative design about its periphery.

FIG. 6A is a bottom view of one embodiment of a lid having a round shape and a single compartment that is surrounded by a countersunk alignment detail.

FIG. 6B is a side view of an embodiment of the container utilizing the lid of FIG. 6B and including a base having a chamfered detail disposed about the periphery of its open top.

FIG. 7A is a side view of one embodiment of the kit with the side portion of the base of the container cut away to show candles and playing pieces stored within the base with the lid in a storage position.

FIG. 7B is a side view of the embodiment of FIG. 7A with the lid in display position and candles disposed within the compartments.

FIG. 8 is a bottom view of one embodiment of the lid in a display position having nine compartments in which of nine scalloped tea light candles are placed and a playing piece portion in which flower shaped playing pieces are shown.

FIG. 9A is a front view of another embodiment of the container that is used as a traditional scone.

FIG. 9B is an exploded side view of the container of FIG. 9A with the lid shown in a display position apart from the base.

FIG. 9C is a top view of the lid of the container of FIGS. 9A & 9B.

FIG. 10A is a side view of another embodiment of the present invention in which tapered candles are utilized.

FIG. 10B is a side view of the embodiment of FIG. 10A with the lid in a display position and tapered candles disposed in its compartments.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

Referring first to FIGS. 1A – 1D, one embodiment of the container 10 of the present invention is shown. The container 10 of the present invention has a hollow base 12 and a lid 24 that is dimensioned to cover the base 12.

The base 12 has a bottom 14 and a side portion 16 that extends from the bottom 14 to define an open top 20 and an interior space 18. As shown in FIGS. 1A – 1D, the interior space 18 is dimensioned to allow three tea light candles 22 to be disposed therein, which corresponds to the number of candles 22 that may be displayed at one time using the lid 24. However, it is understood that the interior space 18 may be dimensioned to

store more candles 22 than the number of candles 22 to be displayed at one time using the lid 24. For example, as shown in other embodiments, the interior space may dimensioned to have a height that allows candles 22 to be stacked upon each other. In others, the interior space 18 is dimensioned to allow candles 22 to be nested beside one another in a single pattern, allowing spare candles 22 to be stored. In still others, the interior space 18 is dimensioned to accept candles 22 of other styles and shapes than tea light candles 22.

The lid 24 is dimensioned to cover the open top 20 of the base 12 and has a top surface 26 and a bottom surface 28. In the embodiment of FIGS. 1A – 1D, the bottom surface 28 of the lid 24 includes three compartments 30 that are each dimensioned to accept and display a tea light candle 22. However, as shown in other embodiments, the bottom surface 28 of the lid 24 may include any number of compartments 30, as well as a wide variety of decorative designs.

The top surface 26 and bottom surface 28 of the lid 24 are each dimensioned to align with, and securely rest upon, the side portion 16 of the base 12. In the embodiment of FIGS. 1A – 1D, the top surface 26 and bottom surface 28 of the lid 24 each include alignment details for aligning the lid with the base when in a storage or display position. As shown in FIG. 1C, the top surface 26 includes an alignment detail made up of chamfered top lip 32 that surrounds its perimeter and allows the top surface 26 to align with, and sit securely upon, the side portion 16 of the base 12 when it is in the display position. As described in detail below, however, some embodiments utilize different alignment details, while others utilize no alignment detail and the design of the top surface 26 is such that it may be securely rested upon the base 12.

Similarly, as shown in FIG. 1D, the bottom surface 28 of the lid 24 may include an alignment detail that includes a bottom lip 34 dimensioned to rest upon the side portion 16 of the base 12 and an extended portion 36 dimensioned to nest within the open top 20 of the base 12 when the lid is in the storage position. In this arrangement, the extended portion 36 secures the lid 24 in place and prevents it from inadvertently sliding off of the base 12. As also described in detail below, however, some embodiments utilize different alignment details, while still others utilize no alignment detail and the design of the bottom surface 28 is such that it may be securely rested upon the base 12

In the embodiment of FIGS. 1A – 1D, the top surface 26 of the lid 24 also includes a decorative design 40 that is formed integral to, and extends from, the top surface 26, while the bottom surface 28 and side portion 16 of the base do not include such a design 40. In the preferred embodiment, each of the top surface 26 and bottom surface 28 of the lid 24, and the side portion 16 of the base 12, include a decorative design 40 disposed upon at least a portion thereof. In other embodiments, such as the embodiment of FIG. 4A, only the side portion 16 of the base 12 includes a decorative design 40. In still others, such as the embodiment of FIG. 3A, the base 12 and lid 24 are unadorned by any decorative design.

Similarly, the type of decorative design 40 may vary from that shown in FIGS. 1A – 1D. For example, in some embodiments the decorative design 40 is in the form of a relief type carving that is interior to the top surface 26. In others, the decorative design 40 is not formed integral to, or extends from, the top surface 26, but rather is a photograph, drawing or other two dimensional design that is affixed or otherwise applied to the top surface 26, bottom surface 28 or side portion 16. In still others, the lid 24 and base 12

are adorned with specific decorative designs to imitate the look of a specific object. For example, in one such embodiment, the top surface 26 of the lid 24 and the side portion 16 of the base 12 each include decorative details 40 to make the container 10 appear to be a book. In others, the base 12 and lid 24 include decorative details 40 to make the container 10 appear to be an old fashioned steamer trunk. Therefore, the decorative designs 40 should not be seen as being limited to those set forth herein.

The container 10 of the present invention may be manufactured from a variety of materials. In the preferred embodiment, the base 12 and lid 24 are made from a resin compound. As noted above, this material is preferred due to the fact that resin is relatively cheap, readily moldable into a variety of shapes and textures, and may be finished with a variety of decorative finishes. However, other embodiments are manufactured of combinations of wood, glass, plastic, metal, ceramics, concrete and stone.

Referring now to FIGS. 2A – 2C, another embodiment of the container 10 of the present invention is shown. FIG. 2A shows the bottom surface 28 of a lid 24 having a substantially oval shape and two compartments 30 that are dimensioned to accept tea light candles 22. In this embodiment, each compartment 30 is surrounded by a decorative design 40 that is formed integral to, and extends from, the bottom surface. In this embodiment, the decorative design 40 also includes alphanumeric text 50, such as words or phrases, that are relief cut into the bottom surface 28. In this embodiment, the top surface 26 and the side portion 16 of the base 12 each include decorative designs 40 disposed upon at least of portion thereof. In the embodiment of FIGS. 2A – 2C, the bottom surface 28 includes a substantially planar bottom lip 34 and the top surface 26

includes a substantially planar a top lip 32, which each serve as an alignment detail.

Finally, as shown in FIG. 2B, the container 10 may be sold as part of a kit that includes tea light candles 22 having cups 56 in the shape of hexagon. However, as described in detail below, it is understood that candles 22 having different shapes and sizes may also

5 be supplied in the kit of the present invention.

Referring now to FIGS. 3A and 3B, another embodiment of the lid 12 of the container 10 of the present invention is shown. In this embodiment, the lid 12 has rectangular shape, and neither the top surface 26 nor the bottom surface 28 have any decorative design. The top surface 26 of this lid includes an alignment detail in the form of a ridge 35 that is dimensioned to mate with a lip that surrounds the open top of the base (not shown). The bottom surface 28 also employs a ridge 37 as an alignment detail and has six compartments 30 that are each dimensioned to accept a tea light candle (not shown).

Referring now to FIGS. 4A and 4B, still another embodiment of the container 10 is shown. In these embodiments, the lid 24 of the container 10 has a shaped top surface 26 from which a handle 58 extends. The top surface 26 is otherwise devoid of decorative design and includes a rounded top lip 60, which serves as an alignment detail when the lid is in a display position. The bottom surface 28 of the lid 24 includes a lip 34, which serves and an alignment detail, and four compartments 30 that are disposed in a shape of a rounded cross. In this embodiment, the bottom surface 28 is otherwise devoid of a decorative design. Finally, the base 12 in this embodiment includes a decorative design 40 that is disposed upon a part of its side portion 16.

Referring now to FIGS. 5A and 5B, still another embodiment of the container 10 is shown. In this embodiment, the base 12 includes an interior space 18 that is dimensioned to store three candles 22 in stacking relation to one another. However, it is recognized that the side portion 16 of the base 12 could be extended or shortened in order to accommodate more or fewer candles 22 than the three candles 22 shown. The lid 24 of this embodiment includes a top surface 26 having a decorative design 40 covering its entirety. This embodiment of the top surface 26 is devoid of any separate alignment detail, but rather the decorative design 40 itself serves to align the lid 24 with the base 12 when, as in FIG. 5B, the lid is in a display position. As shown in FIG. 5B, the bottom surface 28 of the lid 24 includes a single compartment (not shown) into which a single candle 22 is disposed when the lid is in a display position. The bottom surface 28 employs a similar alignment detail to those shown in FIGS. 1 and 3, in which a bottom lip 34 and an extended portion 36 are provided. However, in this embodiment, the extended portion 36 includes a decorative design 40 that is disposed about its periphery and is visible when the lid 24 is in the display position. Finally, the side portion 16 of the base 12 also includes a decorative design 40 disposed about a portion thereof.

Referring now to FIGS. 6A and 6B, another embodiment of the container 10 is shown. In this embodiment, the top 24 and base 12 each are rounded and include complimentary alignment details. This embodiment includes a bottom surface 28 having a single compartment 30 dimensioned to accept one candle 22. Like the embodiment of FIGS. 5A and 5B, the base 12 that has an interior space 18 dimensioned to store candles 22 in stacking relation to one another. The side portion 16 of the base 12 of this embodiment is dimensioned to allow two candles to be stacked atop of one another but,

as noted above, the side portion 16 may be extended or shortened to allow any number of candles 22 to be stacked.

The embodiment of FIGS. 6A and 6B utilizes a different alignment detail than those shown in other embodiments. Here, the side portion 16 of the base 12 includes a chamfered portion 78 that extends about the side portion 16 of the base at a location proximate to the open top 20 and both the top surface 26 and bottom surface 28 include a countersunk alignment detail 80 that is dimensioned to mate with the chamfered portion 18 of the base 12. In other embodiments, however, the base 12 is countersunk while the top surface 26 and bottom surface 28 include chamfered alignment details. It is recognized that the alignment details of FIGS. 6A and 6B may be utilized with any other of the embodiments described herein. Likewise, it is recognized that containers 10 of the type shown in FIGS. 6A and 6B may utilize other alignment details, or no alignment details at all.

Referring now to FIGS. 7A and 7B one embodiment of the kit 90 is shown. This embodiment of the kit includes a container 10 having a base 12 and lid 24, a plurality of tea light candles 22 and a plurality of playing pieces 92 for use in playing games, such as tic-tac-toe. The base 12 includes an interior space that is divided by a divider wall 94, enabling the candles 22 and playing pieces to be segregated. In this embodiment, the playing pieces 92 are common checkers. However, other embodiments may use other types of playing pieces commonly utilized in the game and giftware industries. The bottom surface 28 of the lid 24 is divided into three portions. One portion 96 in which the compartments (not shown) for holding the candles 22 are disposed, and two playing piece portion 98 for holding playing pieces 92 belonging to each player.

FIG. 8 shows a bottom surface of a lid 24 used in connection with the base 12 of the kit 90 of FIGS. 7A and 7B, or in connection with other bases 12. In this embodiment, the bottom surface 28 of the lid 12 includes nine compartments 30 aligned to form a standard tic-tac-toe board and includes a divider 104 that separates the compartments 30 from one playing piece portion 102. As shown in FIG. 8, the playing pieces 92 are flower shaped. However, playing pieces 92 having other designs, or no design at all, may be substituted. In the kit of FIG. 8, a plurality of candles 22 having scalloped cups 100 are shown as disposed within scalloped compartments 30. However, it is recognized that standard tea light candles 22, or candles of other styles or shapes, may also be substituted to achieve similar results.

Referring now to FIGS. 9A – 9C, still another embodiment of the container 10 is shown. In this embodiment, the side portion 16 of the base 12 includes a wall mounting plate 104 that extends from the base 12 to allow the container 10 to be mounted like a traditional sconce. In the embodiment shown, the interior space of the base 12 is sized to accommodate a single tea light candle 22. However, as was the case with other embodiments, the side portion 16 may be extended to accommodate varying numbers of candles 22. The base 12 and lid 24 are square in this embodiment, but may take many different shapes. Likewise, the bottom surface 28 of the lid includes a single compartment (not shown) but could include compartments to hold varying numbers of candles. Therefore, these embodiments should not be seen as being limited to that shown in FIGS. 9A – 9C.

Referring now to FIGS. 10A and 10B, still another embodiment of the container 10 is shown. The container 10 of this embodiment includes a base 12 that has an interior

space dimensioned to accept tapered candles 22 and a lid having a bottom surface 28 that is likewise dimensioned to accept tapered candles 22. The lid 24 is shown as having no alignment details, but could include such details as are shown in connection with other embodiments.

5 Although the present invention has been described in considerable detail with reference to certain preferred versions thereof, other versions would be readily apparent to those of ordinary skill in the art. Therefore, the spirit and scope of the appended claims should not be limited to the description of the preferred versions contained herein.

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